

## Handout: My Name is Jennifer

My name is Jennifer. I am sixteen years old. I went into foster care when I was a baby and then went back home when I was 5. In second grade my mom sent me to live with my grandmother. My grandmother died the next year and I went back to my mom. At age 9 I returned to foster care. I lived with two families and then an adoptive family. But the adoptive family decided they didn't want me. I lived with several families after that. They put me in a group home six months ago. I'm getting out of here and can you believe this? They're looking for another family for me. I'm thinking it might have made more sense if somebody had done more when I was a little kid.

I don't know when I realized that I was different from other kids. It feels like something I always knew. Like I was born with it. That there was something bad about me. I don't hate my parents but I don't think they should have been parents. One of my foster moms told me I was a drug baby. This may be true. I know they put me in foster care because no one was taking care of me and I wasn't growing. I can't remember a lot. But I felt an emptiness or a hurt for many years. I couldn't be filled up. I needed my mom. I needed for the confusion to end. I needed to feel like someone cared about me. When I was little and would see my mom I didn't know what to do. I don't remember a lot about my foster parents. All of that is sort of a blur. What did I need? I needed for the hurt deep inside of me to go away. That's all I could think about.

Source: Adapted from Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Training Program. CWLA, Washington, D.C., 2003.